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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT TRAINING MORE NURSES TO CARE FOR CRITICALLY ILL PATIENTS

New $7-Million Investment Builds On Successful Critical Care Strategy

HAMILTON – The McGuinty government is investing $7 million in critical care training for nurses so that communities such as Hamilton can have improved access to quality, integrated critical care services, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Before our government took office in 2003, there was a severe strain on the system for high-demand critical care services," said Smitherman. "That's one of the reasons why we launched our $90-million Critical Care Strategy, which has delivered increased access to this highly specialized type of care for patients who are seriously injured or critically ill."

Building on the success of the Critical Care Strategy, the government's investment of $7 million will increase training opportunities for critical care nurses. This includes:

- $4.5 million for 61 hospital corporations to assist with the costs of ensuring that 273 critical care nurses meet the new provincial critical care nursing standards.

- $2.5 million for a new critical care nursing e-learning program. This will be operated in partnership with Durham College, to make critical care training more accessible to nurses who may not be able to attend traditional college programs due to distance and/or work or family responsibilities. Through this innovative program, nurses will take part in lectures via the Internet and participate in hands-on training at simulation lab centres.

Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Healthcare will receive $277,000 to support critical care training for 19 nurses.

"This is great news for patients in our communities," said the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni, MPP for Hamilton Mountain. "Specialized training will increase our nurses' capacity to deliver even better care to critical care patients."

"The government is showing real leadership by responding to the growing demand for critical care services and the need for more critical care nurses in the province," said Jocelyn Bennett, Chair, Nursing Subcommittee of the Ontario Critical Care Expert Panel. "This funding will ensure that nurses receive the specialized training required to work effectively in critical care units and to meet the provincial Critical Care Nursing Standards – no matter where they work in Ontario."

The McGuinty government's Critical Care Strategy was announced on January 30, 2006, to meet the needs of patients facing an immediately life-threatening condition in which vital organ systems are at risk of failing. As part of the strategy, the government is:

- Investing $28 million to establish 31 Critical Care Response Teams, which consist of intensive care physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists who are available 24/7 across the province.
- Providing $45 million for 70 additional Intensive Care Unit Beds at over 20 hospitals across the province.
- Establishing Critical Care Performance Coaching Teams comprised of experts in a specific topic area to support hospitals in continuous quality improvement. Each team will develop toolkits and strategies that they will use in collaboration with hospital ICUs.

"We are listening to nurses and are helping them to ensure Ontarians get the care they need and deserve," said Judy Marsales, MPP for Hamilton West.

"We applaud the government's commitment to improving province-wide access to the very best critical care nursing training," said Mary Ferguson-Paré, President, Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. "This funding, as part of the critical care strategy, will go a long way in ensuring nurses are well equipped to continue the tradition of excellent treatment in critical care units."

"Our government recognizes the invaluable contributions of nurses, and this announcement further builds on our support for their profession," said Jennifer Mossop, MPP for Stoney Creek.

"This initiative further builds on the government's unwavering support for nurses in Ontario who make a difference every day caring for our residents," said Ted McMeekin, MPP for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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